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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the basic issue of what is involved in becoming the "skillfully inviting" teacher, as emphasized by William W. Purkey in his book "Inviting School Success: A Self-Concept Approach to Teaching and Learning". After a brief introduction, some basic psychological and ethical assumptions of the concept are articulated. A diagram illustrating the component parts of the "inviting process" is given. These assumptions and component parts are seen as factors which need to be considered in the planned development of "inviting" skills. Next, a six-level, general growth scheme is presented, with the acme of this growth scheme defined as the development of the "fluently inviting teacher." The final section of the paper breaks the "inviting act" into ten steps, and suggests pedagogic strategies for developing proficiency at each of those steps. (Author/LH)

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INVITING SKILL DEVELOPMENT :

A SCHEME, STEPS AND STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

INVITING SKILL DEVELOPMENT : A SCHEME, STEPS AND STRATEGIES

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This paper addresses the basic issue of what is involved in becoming the skillfully inviting teacher emphasized by William W. Purkey in his book Inviting School Success : A Self-Concept Approach to Teaching and Learning (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1978). After a brief introduction, some basic psychological and ethical assumptions of the concept are articulated along with a diagram showing the component parts of the inviting process. These assumptions and component parts are seen as factors which need to be considered in developing inviting skills. Next, a six level general growth scheme is presented. The highest point of this growth scheme is the fluently inviting teacher. This then becomes the goal of inviting skill development. The final section of the paper breaks the inviting act into ten steps and suggests pedagogic strategies for developing proficiency at each of these steps.

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I. Introduction

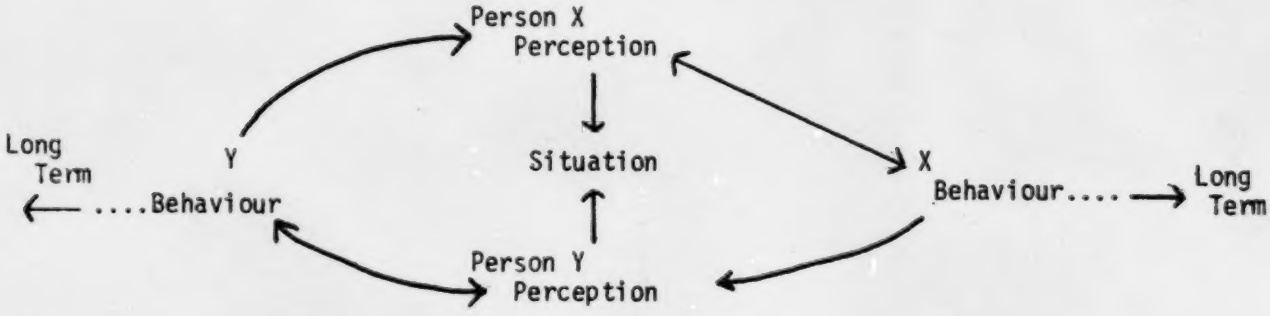
If the idea of inviting school success (Purkey, 1978) is to have the possibility of making a serious and continual effect on the transformation of school environments and teacher behaviours, then it would seem necessary to develop a plan of action for inviting teachers to become skillful and proficient inviters. In addition, such a plan would need to be constructed according to the basic tenets of this inviting philosophy in order to give credence to the power and viability of such an approach. This paper is an attempt to examine what would be involved in developing inviting skills in teachers and how this might be done in an inviting manner.

The basic question addressed in this paper is "What is involved in becoming a skillful inviter?". It is answered by developing a general scheme for classifying inviting behaviours, describing possible steps for extending invitations and finally by suggesting teaching strategies which might invite proficiency in attaining these skills. The position developed here is that, although skillful inviting is built on a perceptual foundation (Combs, Avila, Purkey, 1978) and is more than a technique (Barrett, 1979), it does involve specific types of perceptions and behaviours in which one can gain more proficiency.

II. Overview and Assumptions of the Inviting Process

The term "invitation" as described by Purkey is "a summary description of messages--verbal and non-verbal, formal and informal--continuously transmitted to students with the intention of informing them that they are responsible, able, and valuable" (1978, p.3). The idea has a wide variety of uses in the helping professions and has been extended to specific types of academic invitations (Novak, 1978). Implied in this concept is the notion that people are continually transmitting messages and being affected by the communication process in which they are emersed and that they have some choice in the messages they send and the way they respond to messages sent to them. A diagram of the interpersonal aspects of the inviting process would look like this:

Diagram



The component parts of this diagram involves persons X and Y with past experiences and future anticipations emersed in a particular perceived situation in which they are mutually sending messages and responding to each other's

messages. Based on this diagram the factors affecting the inviting process are the short and long term sender-receiver perceptions/behaviours related to the nature of the situation, the other person, self and the messages previously sent. These are factors which need to be considered in developing inviting skills.

In addition, there seem to be certain psychological and ethical assumptions underlying the inviting approach. Although it is not within the scope of this paper to go into detail regarding each of these points, they do need to be made explicit and incorporated into a program for inviting skill development. Thus, in terms of how people learn and behave the inviting approach assumes the following:

1. People behave according to how the world seems to them (how they perceive).
2. Basic perceptions are learned through encounters with other people and the world.
3. An important perception we learn is who we are (self concept) and how the world works. We see ourself situated in a world.
4. It is possible to understand the process by which basic self perceptions are learned.
5. Using the knowledge of #4, it is possible to send intentional messages which cordially summon people to perceive themselves as valuable, able and responsible.
6. People can become more skillful and fluent in the process of sending these inviting messages.

In terms of what people ought to do the inviting approach assumes the following:

1. It is worthwhile to be inviting.
2. Desirable consequences occur as a result of the inviting process.
3. To invite is to acknowledge and respect the receiver's rights to accept, reject or hold in abeyance the invitation extended.
4. An invitation may involve responsibilities which the inviter will need to follow through on.

In summary, the process of inviting is an approach to interpersonal communications based on a perceptual interpretation (Combs, Richards and Richards, 1976) of what is important to people, how they learn and how they ought to be treated. As such it involves both psychological and ethical assumptions which need to be considered in developing inviting skills.

III. A General Growth Scheme for the Inviting Teacher

An attempt to systematically develop inviting skills needs some type of growth scheme (Popp and Bennett, 1978) so that various levels of behaviour can be described and a perceptual/behavioural goal can be specified. The beginning for such a scheme was provided for in a four level analysis by Purkey (1978, pp.17-20). This four level approach however ended with its highest stage as intentionally inviting. Although this certainly is a high level of invitational functioning it seems to leave out the notion of habit (Dewey, 1933).

The following six stage scheme attempts to include this:

F. Fluently inviting

E. Intentionally inviting

D. Unintentionally inviting

C. Unintentionally disinviting

B. Intentionally disinviting

A. Fluently disinviting

A. Fluently disinviting refers to messages that are transmitted with skill and dexterity and are intended to inform students that they are not valuable, responsible or capable. Behaviour in this category is performed quite naturally and flows from the typical style the teacher has developed.

B. Intentionally disinviting refers to messages that are thought out and intended to inform students that they are not valuable, responsible or capable. Behaviour in this category involves a break from the normal style the teacher has developed.

C. Unintentionally disinviting refers to messages that are transmitted for positive or neutral purposes but are interpreted by the receiver as communicating a lack of value, responsibility or capability.

D. Unintentionally inviting refers to messages which are received and interpreted by the receiver in a positive way. The sender did not aim at such a result or does not understand how or why the message had that effect.

E. Intentionally inviting refers to messages transmitted and perceived as bidding the receiver to view himself/herself as valuable, able and responsible and to act accordingly. This type of behaviour represents a reflection on a situation and the development of a special, positive message.

F. Fluently inviting refers to messages that are transmitted with skill and dexterity and are intended to inform students that they are valuable, responsible or capable. Behaviours in this category are performed quite naturally and flow from the typical style the teacher has developed. If the teacher has difficulty at this level he or she can go back to the previous stage to develop a special invitation.

Thus the goal for inviting skill development is teachers who can can consistently demonstrate fluently inviting perceptions/behaviours. This obviously is no easy task.

IV. Inviting Steps and Strategies

With the goal in mind of developing fluently inviting teachers, a number of steps can be delineated by breaking the inviting act into a series of decisions teachers make before, during and after contact with students. The following ten steps are further broken down into more basic components with possible pedagogic strategies listed also.

1. Pre-active level (before coming in contact with students)
   (a) "Wanting to" (be inclined to intentionally invite).
      I. Components
         1. Understand the general principles of the inviting approach.
         2. Provide personal examples of invitations and disinvitations received.
         3. Possess general inviting perception of students, self, frame of reference and purpose (Wasicksko, 1977).
      II. Strategies
         1. Present basic framework of inviting approach in a didactic manner and ask for written examples of teacher behaviour from each of the six stages.

2. Ask for written personal example of invitation and disinvitation and personal reaction then and now.
3. Teach perceptual inference skills (Wasicsko, 1977).

(b) Preparing the Setting

I. Components

1. Analysis of inviting and disinviting aspects of physical environment.
2. Awareness of personal biases towards certain students.
3. Create a positive mental set toward student.

II. Strategies

1. Use an Inviting Environment Questionnaire (Cook, Milson and Videl, 1979).
2. Develop written, honest confrontations with student (Gordon, 1974).
3. Recreate perceptual world of disinvited students and describe behaviour of ideal teacher with positive perceptions towards these students.

2. Interactive Level (while in contact with students)

(a) Developing Trust

I. Components

1. Making personal contact with each student.
2. Awareness of intentionally and unintentionally disinviting behaviours.

II. Strategies

1. Develop systematic records and schedules for making contact with students.
2. Role play practice sending verbal, non verbal, formal and informal disinvitations.

(b) Reading the situation

I. Components

1. Recognizing signs that invitations are needed.
2. Categorizing type of invitation needed.
3. Assessing personal feeling towards extending particular invitations.

II. Strategies

1. Use of the Florida Key to assess students in terms of relating, asserting, investing and coping (Purkey, Cage and Graves, 1973).
2. Development of specific invitations for relating, asserting, investing and coping.
3. Value-note the likelihood of extending particular invitations developed by the group.

(c) Making invitations attractive

I. Components

1. Differentiating between attractive and unattractive possible messages.
2. Deciding on best way to extend.

II. Strategies

1. Role play unattractive invitation and decide on criteria for attractiveness.
2. Role play potential attractive invitations.

(d) Checking reception of invitation.

I. Components

1. Reading reaction of receiver to message.
2. Probing recipient for response to invitation.

II. Strategies

1. Practice in coding verbal, non-verbal, paraverbal responses to invitations.
2. Role play verbal and non-verbal probes.

(e) Negotiating

I. Components

1. Decide on alternative invitations.
2. Invite recipient to suggest possible invitations.

II. Strategies

1. Write out basic invitation plus three options.
2. Practice making perceptive requests for potential invitations.

(f) Handling rejection

I. Components

1. Accepting student's rights to reject invitations.
2. Finding out why the message was rejected.
3. Admitting personal effects of rejection.

II. Strategies

1. Writing out open-ended responses to rejected invitations.
2. Analysis of rejected invitations in terms of message, situation, sender and receiver.
3. Discussion of feelings, thoughts and behaviours after being rejected.

3. Post-active (After coming in contact with student)

(a) Following through on invitations.

I. Components

1. Awareness of responsibilities of invitation.
2. Setting stage for further invitation.

II. Strategies

1. Listing necessary short term and long term follow-up to invitation.
2. Practicing sending double strength invitations.

(b) Accepting and acknowledging invitations received.

I. Components

1. Becoming aware of invitations you would like to receive.
2. Recognizing invitations being sent.

II. Strategies

1. Writing out invitations wanted.
2. Listing inviting and potentially inviting messages being sent and received in present environment.

Following the experiential taxonomy developed by Steinaker and Bell (1979), a final component of inviting skill development would be dissemination by the participants of the basic ideas and skills of the inviting approach. A pedagogic strategy for the realization of this goal would be to have participants plan, practice and actually do workshops on inviting principles.

V. Final Statement

Following the preceding steps and strategies cannot guarantee that teachers will become fluently inviting. But like a good invitation they are intended to cordially summon teachers to examine, refine and extend their personal perceptions and behaviours related to this concept. It is with this spirit that they need to be practiced. There is obviously a need to field test these steps and strategies. This should be happening in the not too distant future.

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